



KentuckyHistoricalSociety

TORN WITHIN & THREATENED WITHOUT
KENTUCKIANS IN THE CIVIL WAR ERA



Pre-Visit Activity

8th Grade

Primary Source Document Analysis

Overview:

This pre-visit activity is designed to increase students' abilities to analyze primary source texts. Students will read and discuss excerpts from the diary of Elijah Marrs, who escaped slavery in 1864 and joined the Union Army in Louisville. Marrs is one of seven Kentuckians featured in the HistoryMobile's exhibition, "Torn Within and Threatened Without: Kentuckians and the Civil War Era." **This pre-visit activity is designed to complement a broader project-based experience for students that includes a visit from the HistoryMobile and post-visit activities.** All HistoryMobile activities support Common Core English Language Arts standards.

The HistoryMobile exhibit "Torn Within and Threatened Without: Kentuckians and the Civil War Era" features eight Kentuckians ranging from the famous to the everyday citizen. Through personal recollections, primary sources, authentic artifacts and touch-screen activities, students can learn critical thinking strategies and explore the difficult decisions Kentuckians faced during the Civil War. Each story highlights the importance of individual choice as a major factor in shaping Kentucky history.

Time Required: 1 Hour

Common Core Standards Addressed:

English Language Arts » History/Social Studies » Grade 6-8

Key Ideas and Details

- ❖ CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.
- ❖ CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.2 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

Craft and Structure

- ❖ CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary specific to domains related to history/social studies.
- ❖ CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.5 Describe how a text presents information (e.g., sequentially, comparatively, causally).
- ❖ CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.6 Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author's point of view or purpose (e.g., loaded language, inclusion or avoidance of particular facts).

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

- ❖ CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.8 Distinguish among fact, opinion, and reasoned judgment in a text.

Essential Resources:

- Primary Source Autobiography Excerpts from the [*Life and History of the Rev. Elijah P. Marrs*](#)
- [SOAPstone Document Analysis Worksheet](#)

Activity

1. Assign students to work individually or in small groups to read and analyze the primary source letter excerpts: [*Life and History of the Rev. Elijah P. Marrs*](#)
 - a. Students take 15 minutes to read the letter.
 - b. Still working in groups, students take 15 minutes to complete the [SOAPstone Document Analysis Worksheet](#)
 - i. Class discussion of SOAPstone Questions:

Excerpts from the *Life and History of the Rev. Elijah P. Marrs*

Background: Elijah Marrs born into slavery near Shelbyville, Ky., in 1840. Marrs escaped from his master in 1864 to enlist in the Union Army in Louisville. The following excerpts are from pages 17-25.

...Robinson's was general headquarters for the negroes, and I would read to them for hours at a time. It soon became known that I was reading to the slaves of the neighborhood, and that I was also familiar with the pen. At this time the county was full of rebels, and it was not long until they heard of me. I was branded as the Shelby County negro clerk. My owner took me to task one day and warned me of the danger I was incurring if I should be caught by the rebels.

..I remember the morning I made up my mind to join the United States Army. I started to Simpsonville, and walking along I met many of my old comrades on the Shelbyville Pike. I told them of my determination, and asked all who desired to join my company to roll his coat sleeves above his elbows, and to let them remain so during the day. I marshaled my forces that day and night. I had twenty-seven men, all told, and I was elected their captain to lead them to Louisville. Our headquarters were at the colored church. During the day some one brought the news that the rebels were in Simpsonville, and that they were preparing to make a raid upon the church... I picked up courage and rallied my men, and news soon came that the report was false. We held a council of war, and the conclusion of the boys was, that where I would lead they would follow. I said to them we might as well go; that if we staid at home we would be murdered; that if we joined the army and were slain in battle, we would at least die in fighting for principle and freedom...

...During all this excitement no white face was to be seen. Night came, and Rev. Sandy Bullitt, son of Deacon John Bullitt, who had been drafted into the U. S. Army, was to preach his farewell sermon... It was known by nearly every one present that night that there were a number of young men in the house who were preparing to leave for the army, and they the best in the neighborhood, consequently there was great weeping and mourning--the wife for husband, the maiden for her sweetheart.

...Our arms consisted of twenty-six war clubs and one old rusty pistol, the property of the captain. There was one place on our route we dreaded, and that was Middletown, through which the colored people seldom passed with safety. When we got within two miles of the place I ordered my men to circle to the left until we got past the town, when we returned to the Pike, striking it in front of Womack's big woods. At this place we heard the rumbling of vehicles coming at full speed, as we supposed, towards us. I at once ordered the men to lie down in a ditch by the roadside, where we remained some twenty-five minutes, but hearing nothing further I ordered my men to arise and we took up our line of march.

...Day was now breaking, and in one half hour we were within the lines of the Union Army, and by eight o'clock we were at the recruiting office in the city of Louisville. Here we found Mr. George Womack, the Provost Marshal, in whose dark woods we had taken shelter the night before. By twelve o'clock the owner of every man of us was in the city hunting his slaves, but we had all enlisted save one boy, who was considered too young. I enlisted on the 26th day of

September, 1864, and was immediately marched out Third Street to Taylor Barracks, and assigned to Company L, Twelfth U. S. Colored Artillery.

...Breakfast time came, the tattoo was beat, and the men formed into line. I was not disobedient to the call. The Orderly Sergeant called the roll, and when he called "Marrs, Elijah," I promptly answered. I can stand this said I, and like a man, with cup, pan, and spoon, marched up to the window and received my rations. It is true I thought of my mother's sweet voice when she used to call me to dine, but "pshaw!" said I, "this is better than slavery, though I do march in line to the tap of the drum." I felt freedom in my bones, and when I saw the American eagle, with outspread wings, upon the American flag, with the motto, "E Pluribus Unum," the thought came to me, "Give me liberty or give me death." Then all fear banished. I had quit thinking as a child and had commenced to think as a man. I had in camp some reputation as a writer, though I had little confidence in myself, coming as I did just out of the bondage of slavery. I appeared, however, to be above the average of those in our quarters, and many former friends who had joined the army before me employed me to do their writing.

...Soon the officers learned that there was a little fellow from Shelby County that was skilled in the use of the pen, and they sought to find me. They found me surrounded by a number of the men, each waiting his turn to have a letter written home. The officers soon made known their wishes, which was to find a man who was a penman who they wished as a Duty Sergeant. The mere mention of such a thing made me quake with fear, as I knew no more about tactics than a new born babe. This I told them, but they insisted, and I accepted the position as a non-commissioned officer, with the understanding that they would give me personal instruction in army tactics. At their headquarters I had a consultation with them respecting my duties as a non-commissioned officer. Lieut. Bassworth was my chief instructor, together with Lieut. Vaughn. Early the next day I was assigned as Third Duty Sergeant, Co. L. 12th U. S. Heavy Artillery.

...The fourth day I was ordered by the commanding officer to take a squad of men and go to Tenth and Broadway streets, and clear off ground for the erection of barracks. While I felt myself a free man and an U. S. soldier, still must I move at the command of a white man, and I said to myself is my condition any better now than before I entered the army? But the idea would come to me that I was a soldier fighting for my freedom, and this thought filled my heart with joy. I thought, too, that the time will come when no man can say to me come and go, and I be forced to obey.

Source Citation: Marrs, Elijah P., *Life and History of the Rev. Elijah P. Marrs, First Pastor of Beargrass Baptist Church, and Author.* The Bradley and Gilbert Company. Louisville, Ky. 1885: Pgs. 17-25.



SOAPstone Document Analysis Worksheet

Name(s) _____

Speaker <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Who is the Speaker?• What role does he or she play in an historic event?	
Occasion <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is the time and place?• What is the context that prompted the writing?	
Audience <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Who is the audience for this document?• Why might they be interested in its message?	
Purpose <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is the purpose of the document?• Why was it written?	
Subject <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is the general topic, content, or idea contained in the text?	
-Tone <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is the attitude expressed by the speaker?• Examine the choice of words, emotions expressed and imagery used.	